

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SUVA 00928 042246Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00
OMB-01 DOTE-00 FMC-01 CG-00 DLOS-09 OES-07 AGRE-00
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R 032210Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6343

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR PLAD

DEPARTMENT PASS USDOC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, ETRD, FJ, US

SUBJECT: NEW DOCK STRIKE BEGINS AUGUST 2

REF: A) SUVA 0885, B) WELLINGTON 02791

1. THE FIJI WATERSIDE WORKER'S AND SEAMEN'S UNION ON
AUGUST 2 BEGAN A NEW ILLEGAL STRIKE AGAINST THE PORT
AUTHORITY OF FIJI.

2. ACTION FOLLOWED THREATS MADE BY THE INDUSTRIAL
ADVISER TO THE UNION, TANIELA VIETATA, AT DOCKWORKERS'S
RALLY ON JULY 29 WHICH WAS ORGANIZED TO COUNTER MAJOR
DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF GOF REPORTED IN REFTTEL A.

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PAGE 02 SUVA 00928 042246Z

VIETATA WAS ARRESTED THIS MORNING (AUGUST 3) ON FRESH
CHARGES OF COUNSELING AND INFLUENCING AN ILLEGAL
STRIKE. HE IS REMANDED IN CUSTODY UNTIL AUGUST 5 WHEN
A DATE FOR HEARING WILL BE SET.

3. UNION ALLEGED THAT PRIORITY WAS BEING GIVEN THE
PROSECUTION OF UNION LEADERS AT THE EXPENSE OF A QUICK

DECISION BY AN ARBITRATOR ON THE DOCKERS' PAY CLAIMS. ALLEGATION IS UNFOUNDED, SINCE AGREEMENT WAS REACHED BY ALL PARTIES LAST WEEK THAT THE ARBITRATOR'S AWARD WOULD BE RETROACTIVE TO JULY 1 EVEN THOUGH ARBITRATION WAS PUT OFF UNTIL AUGUST 8 WHEN COURT PROCEEDINGS AGAINST VIETATA AND UNION OFFICIALS RESULTING FROM FIRST STRIKE, WHICH ENDED JULY 18, WOULD BE COMPLETED.

4. THE GOF, THROUGH THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, RATU SIR PENAIA GANILAU, CONDEMNED THE STRIKE AS "IRRESPONSIBLE AND SELFISH" AND IN "TOTAL DISREGARD FOR OUR COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE."

5. FIJI'S MAJOR ECONOMIC ASSET, THE SUGAR INDUSTRY, IS AGAIN HARD HIT. THE STRIKE IS PREVENTING THE LOADING OF 50,000 TONS OF SUGAR DESTINED FOR THE UK. THIRTEEN DOCKWORKERS IN LAUTOKA, MAIN SUGAR PORT, WERE TODAY CHARGED FOR TAKING PART IN AN ILLEGAL STRIKE AND WILL BE BROUGHT TO COURT TOMORROW.

6. FIJI HAS BEEN CONSIDERING SENDING TRADE MISSIONS TO ASIA (THE PRC, SINGAPORE, HONG KONG) AND TO NORTH AMERICA (CANADA AND THE US). BECAUSE OF HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND ECONOMICALLY, AND THE PREJUDICIAL INFLUENCE OF AUS AND NZ WATERSIDE UNIONS, FIJI WISHES TO DIVERSIFY TRADE PATTERNS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 SUVA 00928 042246Z

AROUND THE ENTIRE PACIFIC BASIN. STRIKE HAS ALREADY SERIOUSLY AFFECTED SMALLER SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS FOR WHICH SUVA SERVES AS DISTRIBUTION CENTER, AND CONTINUED STOPPAGES COULD HARM FIJI'S STANDING AS AREA ENTREPOD.

7. COMMENT: VIETATA SEEMS DETERMINED ACHIEVE MARTYRDOM, PRECIPITATE SHOWDOWN WITH ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT, WHICH HE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF RACIST FIJIAN NATIONALIST PARTY (FNP) BELIEVE WILL GAIN SUPPORT FOR FNP IN SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS VIETATA MUST HAVE KNOWN PUBLIC THREAT OF NEW STRIKE IS ILLEGAL, NOT TO SPEAK OF AGAIN WALKING OUT WITHOUT 28-DAY NOTICE.

8. GIVEN RISING PUBLIC RESENTMENT AND PRIME MINISTER RATU MARA'S DETZDMINATION ENFORCE STATUTES IN FACE OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN UNION PRESSURE, NEWEST TURN IN DISPUTE HAS UNPLEASANT IMPLICATIONS. WHILE WE EXPECT MOST OF RATU MARA'S UNHAPPINESS OVER FOREIGN UNION SOLIDARITY WITH FIJI DOCKERS TO BE DIRECTED AT AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND, WE HOPE REPLY TO REFTEL B WILL CONTAIN SOME REASSURANCES RESPONSIVE TO PRIME MINISTER'S

FRUSTRATIONS.

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